

1. Introduction

I-75 is the main north-south roadway through Oakland County. It currently varies from three to four lanes in each direction (Figure 1-1). The I-75 Corridor Feasibility Study,¹ completed in November 2000, recommended the widening of the three-lane sections of I-75 in Oakland County to four lanes. It also recommended the improvement of several interchanges and arterial streets near I-75. The federal action covered by this project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will address the widening of I-75 from three to four through travel lanes in each direction between 8 Mile Road (exit 59) and M-59 (exit 77), a distance of 18 miles. MDOT has plans for additional widening I-75 north of the existing four-lane section north of the M-24 area. However, the proposed improvements between 8 Mile Road and M-59 have independent utility, i.e., they can stand alone and provide transportation benefits without relying upon the development of other projects.

The proposed improvements include: 1) reconstructing the 12 Mile Road interchange as a single point interchange; 2) reconstructing the 14 Mile Road interchange, much as it is with added capacity; and, 3) adding capacity to the eastbound to northbound ramp at the I-696 interchange. Modifications to the Crooks/Long Lake interchange and the M-59 interchange are separate projects. Other independent, but related projects include a new pedestrian bridge over I-75 south of Auburn Road and noise mitigation in the Square Lake Road area that has moved to the design phase.

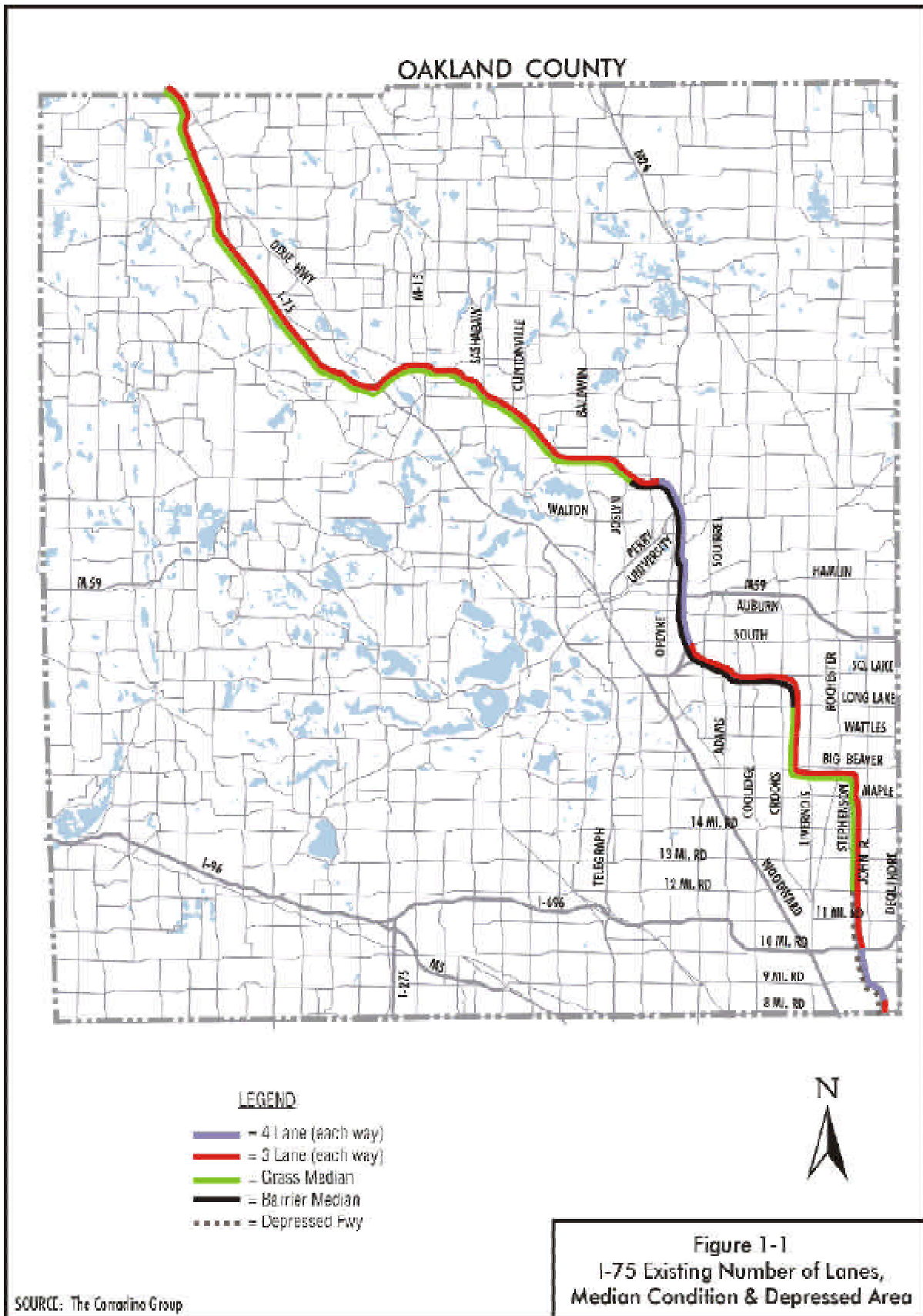
This EIS for the proposed improvements will be the product of the I-75 Oakland County Planning/Environmental Study, which is listed in the Southeast Michigan Council of Government's (SEMCOG's) 2025 Regional Transportation Plan, in SEMCOG's Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), and in the Michigan Department of Transportation's (MDOT's) Five-Year Road & Bridge Program (Volume IV – 2002 to 2006) for the Metro Region.

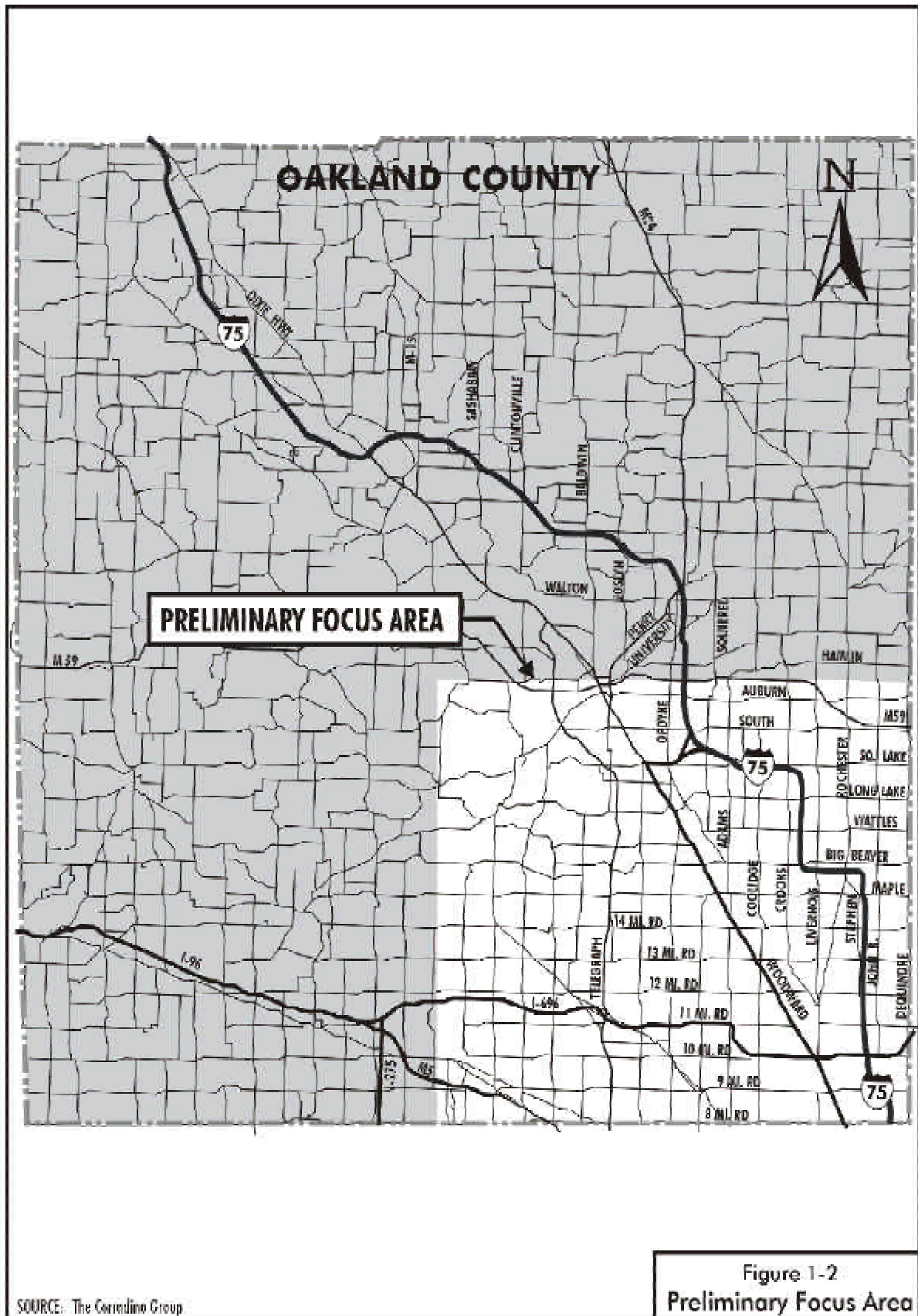
1.1 Purpose of Information Packet

This Scoping Information Packet identifies issues of interest that may result from improvements proposed to be made to I-75 between 8 Mile Road (exit 59) and M-59 (exit 77) in Oakland County, Michigan (Figure 1-2) and to provide preliminary assessments of specific areas. I-75 is the main north-south roadway through Oakland County. Within the project limits, it connects to M-102 (8 Mile Road), I-696, and M-59, and many other major state highways and roads. Within southeast Michigan, I-75 links with I-94, I-96, I-275, and I-375. Nationally I-75 runs from Miami, Florida to Sault Ste. Marie, Canada.

The proposed project consists of adding one lane in each direction over most of the 18-mile project length. Within the study area, I-75 is oriented in a diagonal fashion along a general northwest/southeast axis. Access is available at 12 interchanges.

¹*I-75 Corridor Study in Oakland County*; The Corradino Group for the Michigan Department of Transportation, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, the Road Commission for Oakland County and the Traffic Improvement Association; November 2000.





I-75 has high traffic volumes, especially during peak commuting hours. The high volumes exceed roadway capacity today in a number of sections and conditions will worsen in the future.

It is anticipated that the proposed action can be documented in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The process of gathering project-related data for the environmental analysis began with the I-75 Corridor Study (available at www.mdot.state.mi.us/projects/I-75corridor/), which was completed in November 2000. This packet identifies the social, economic and environmental issues that are expected to be factors in evaluating highway improvements. Impact categories expected to be “potentially significant” are identified. But, it is recognized the level of significance of any impact category as presented herein may change as more data become available.

1.2 Scoping Meetings/Review Comments

Scoping is an integral part of the environmental impact analysis. It allows the early exchange of information between governmental agencies at all levels and provides a mechanism to identify potential environmental issues at an early stage in the assessment process. For this study, the scoping meeting will introduce the Project Team; define the project schedule; and, solicit improvement concepts as well as key issues of an economic, environmental, social, and/or transportation nature. A list of agencies invited to the scoping meeting is contained in the appendix.

1.3 Studies and Evaluation of Alternatives

Technical studies will be prepared to contribute to the development of the Draft EIS. Technical memoranda will also be prepared, as appropriate, for the following impact categories:

- ✍ Transit
- ✍ Traffic
- ✍ Air Quality
- ✍ Noise
- ✍ Historic/Archaeological Resources
- ✍ Hazardous Materials
- ✍ Wetlands

1.4 Future Procedures

Development of practical alternatives and the accompanying environmental analysis will be summarized in the Draft EIS. It will be the subject of comment at a public hearing. Based on input from the public, and other communications with stakeholders and agencies, further refinements will be made to arrive at the recommended alternative. A Final EIS and a Record of Decision will be prepared after the Public Hearing. In addition, access modification studies may be required. Such studies demonstrate that proposed changes to the interstate highways are in the best interest of the public and that the changes do not compromise the functioning of an interstate as a through travel route. These studies must receive approval by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) that is independent of the FEIS approval.

2. Planning Basis and Need for the Proposed Action

The I-75 Oakland County Planning/Environmental Study is an Early Preliminary Engineering (EPE)/Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) project. It is being conducted by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) for an 18-mile segment of I-75 in Oakland County, Mich. The main purpose of the study is to identify recommended roadway and interchange improvements along the existing alignment between 8 Mile Road and M-59. These improvements will, once implemented, bring this segment of I-75 up to most current MDOT engineering standards and modernize the existing roadway to accommodate future traffic growth including trucking.

Based on this background, the purpose of the project is to:

1. Improve travel efficiency and roadway capacity in the I-75 corridor by upgrading, where feasible, road segments, interchanges, and bridges to modern standards and making other transportation improvements (including the use of Intelligent Transportation Systems [ITS]) designed to accommodate projected year 2025 traffic volumes;
2. Improve the physical condition of existing bridges and road segments; and,
3. Improve motorist safety.

2.1 Population, Land Use, and Development

Two of the most important factors influencing traffic volumes are population and land use. The following subsections present population and land use trends that are relevant to existing and future traffic volumes in the project area.

2.1.1 Population

There has been extensive growth in Oakland County in both employment and population. The population increased seven percent from 1,012,000 to 1,084,000 between 1980 and 1990. Over the last decade it increased nearly 10 percent from 1,084,000 to 1,194,000. It is expected to increase by an additional 13 percent to 1,350,000 over the next 30 years. Employment has increased by 34 percent from 681,000 to 910,000 over the last decade and is expected to increase by an additional 21 percent to 1,100,000 over the next 30 years.² In 2020 it is expected that Oakland County will have nearly 19 percent of the state of Michigan's total employment and more than 29 percent of the total earnings in the state.³

²2030 Regional Development Forecast for Southeast Michigan, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, SEMCOG; 2001.

³Woods and Poole Economics, Inc.; 1999 State Profile; Michigan.

2.1.2 Land Use

I-75 is used by Oakland County commuters and by through travelers. When I-75 was originally planned, it was laid out in a stair-step manner following section lines and property lines, to minimize impacts to the development that existed at the time. Since the early 1960s when the road was built, I-75 has influenced the course of development. Urban land uses extended north to about 12 Mile Road at that time. North of this area, development began to focus around interchanges. Thus, mobility became focused on I-75 from the time of its construction and since. Land use in the south part of the corridor has always been primarily residential and commercial. This pattern continued northward after I-75 was constructed, but in a less dense manner, without the support of an urban grid of streets. There are several large traffic generators in the study area. These currently include the Pontiac Silverdome, many large office buildings, including the headquarters of Kmart and Kelly Services, the Oakland Mall, and Somerset Mall.

2.2 Existing Traffic Volumes

Level of Service (LOS) is a standard measurement that reflects the degree of congestion and amount of delay experienced by motorists. LOS is expressed by a letter between A and F. LOS A represents a situation where motorists experience minimal congestion, minimal delays, and experience free flow travel conditions. LOS F represents a situation where motorists experience extreme congestion, long delays, and severely impeded traffic flows.

I-75 in the project area operates from LOS C (light congestion) to LOS F (extremely congested) along the mainline during today's peak periods. Table 2-1 and Figure 2-1 illustrate the afternoon (PM) peak traffic volumes and LOS for each segment of the study area. Figure 2-1 shows the existing LOS.

Table 2-1
Existing (2002) PM Peak Hour Traffic Volumes and LOS for I-75

Segment	Volume		NB LOS*	SB LOS*
	Northbound	Southbound		
8 Mile Road to 9 Mile Road	6,290	4,780	D	C
9 Mile Road to I-696	6,220	5,270	D	C
I-696 to 11 Mile Road	6,300	6,080	D	D
11 Mile Road to 12 Mile Road	5,900	5,050	F	F
12 Mile Road to 14 Mile Road	5,830	4,420	E	D
14 Mile Road to Rochester Road	4,840	4,680	D	D
Rochester Road to Big Beaver Road	4,120	4,400	D	D
Big Beaver Road to Crooks Road	3,850	4,000	C	C
Crooks Road to Adams Road	3,750	3,640	C	C
Adams Road to Square Lake Road	4,100	3,710	F	F
Square Lake Road (I-75 BL) to M-59	5,950	4,750	D	C
North of M-59	6,150	5,165	D	C

*Due to weaving activity and incidents, LOS is most often at E or F.